

**Town of Los Gatos
State of the Town
Thursday, February 17, 2005
7:00 p.m.**

Good evening and welcome.

On behalf of the Town Council, I would like to welcome you to the 2005 State of the Town Address. My name is Mike Wasserman and it's my honor to serve you as the Mayor of Los Gatos. I would now like to introduce the members of our Town Council:

- Vice Mayor Diane McNutt
- Council Member Joe Pirzynski
- Council Member Barbara Spector
- Council Member Steve Glickman, is out of town and could not be with us this evening.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the many other elected officials – both past and present I see here tonight.

Before I begin, I would like us to share a moment of silence to recognize and honor Fire Captain Mark McCormack of the Santa Clara County Fire Department, who was fatally injured while responding to a four alarm fire on Blossom Hill Road.

Thank you.

It seems each year when the State of the Town address is given, there is a theme or message included. Well, this year is no different, except the message the Council and I want to share with the great residents of Los Gatos comes in four parts:

First, is that this Town is in great shape. Unlike a lot of communities in the bay area and throughout the nation, our Town is fiscally stable.

Second, the Town Council and I want to work with you to create a vision for Los Gatos to identify our community's priorities.

Third, is that there are a few "bumps in the road ahead" – and I mean that quite literally," but we will overcome them.

And last, but not least, there's a golden opportunity waiting for us, just around the corner.

Before I elaborate upon this evening's four part message, I'd like to share why 2005 is a very significant year for me personally:

This year my first born will graduate from Los Gatos High School. This year I will have had a Los Gatos address for 30 years. This year I will have been married to my wife Kim for 25 years. And this year it is my honor to serve the people of Los Gatos as their Mayor.

Like most of you, Los Gatos is my home and for that reason, my primary concern.

Although the State and our local economy struggle to recover and I wish the war overseas would end tomorrow, at the end of the day, it's the Los Gatos community that my fellow Council members and I are able to help most.

Now, back to the four themes of this year's State of the Town Address.

Last weekend, I had a face to face conversation with Tom Campbell. He's the former State Senator and United States Congressman who now serves as the Governor's State Finance Director. Mr. Campbell said that if the Governor's budget isn't passed, that all programs throughout the State, except our VLF income, will be subject to across the board cuts. This includes areas such as education and roads.

Fortunately, our Town is in great shape, but it's important we continually monitor the activities at the State level and plan accordingly -- to minimize the chances of being caught by surprise or unprepared.

Despite the slow economy, our Town remains fiscally stable. Our prudent, yet strategic planning has enabled us to navigate through uncertain and challenging fiscal waters, which we will continue to face.

Although key revenue such as sales tax and property tax are trending ahead of estimates for this fiscal year, the Town continues to project a revenue shortfall for the next 5 years.

Next year's shortfall is estimated at around \$1 million due to the economic downturn and slow revenue growth, and an increase in the cost to deliver services. I'll admit, the upcoming budget process won't be easy. There will be difficult choices to make and some services will be reduced.

However, as we tighten our belts, we will take the time and care to make sure we balance the community's service needs and interests with available Town resources.

One of the many things we are doing to help strengthen our economic base, is market our community – not just by working to attract, retain, and assist businesses, but to better promote Los Gatos as a travel destination spot, which will support our local economy.

Even with all of this uncertainty, one thing is clear. Los Gatos continues to be one of the most desirable places to live in the United States.

Property values continue to rise and our schools are among the very best in the State of California. Residents continue to enjoy Shakespeare in the Park, Screen on the Green, the Farmers Market, Cats Hill Bike Race, Jazz in the Plazz and Music in the Park – not to mention the country's longest running Children's Christmas Parade.

Our hills are beautiful, our crime rate low and our weather unparalleled. These are just some of the features that make Los Gatos so desirable.

The second message comes from this year's Council Retreat. The Council unanimously agreed that a strategic plan reflecting the community's priorities should be developed in conjunction with the 2010 General Plan update. Los Gatos is your community, your home – and we want to work with you to create a vision for Los Gatos.

Right now, the Town is undertaking several significant projects. One of the Council's goals is to educate and communicate the impacts and benefits of these projects to residents. Some of them include:

- Enhancing the appearance and character of the Town through the North 40 Specific Plan and residential and commercial design guidelines.
- Continuing to be a responsive and cost effective government, by enhancing our website, pursuing e-government opportunities, and seeking your feedback on Town services.
- Maintaining fiscal stability through good fiscal management and supporting economic vitality through business retention, expansion, and attraction.

- Keeping our infrastructure healthy by completing the downtown streetscape program and other key capital projects.
- Improving transportation, traffic, and parking through innovative approaches, such as the recently proposed mini community buses.
- And last, but not least, addressing the social, recreational, and educational needs of individuals – from our youth to our seniors.

The third part of tonight's message has to deal with those "bumps in the road" I mentioned previously. I chose that metaphor to correspond directly with the replacing of the water lines and street resurfacing that needs to be done on Santa Cruz Avenue.

As most of you know, a street repair of some sort is being planned for Santa Cruz Avenue this summer. We've been outreaching to the community about this project since July of 2004, and recently held our 8th community meeting last week at the Los Gatos Theater.

While it is currently undecided as to when and how the 100 year old water pipes under Santa Cruz Avenue and street resurfacing will be done, we do know it needs to be done in the not too distant future. There are several possible scheduling and construction alternatives that need to be explored – all of which will be discussed at the February 22 Town Council meeting.

Admittedly, this construction will be inconvenient for many of us, some more than others. That is why, regardless of when the construction takes place, the Town is making plans to make shopping as convenient as possible for everyone.

Some of our efforts may include valet parking, new community buses, and way-finding signage to parking, to reduce construction impacts.

In order to help the downtown businesses during this construction period – especially those on Santa Cruz Avenue, I call upon all residents to do what I've done for the last twelve months and that is to buy everything you need in Los Gatos.

Frankly, each of you should do that whenever possible. After all, it benefits you in the end.

Part of every sales tax dollar collected in Los Gatos comes back to you in one way or another, such as your streets, parks, libraries, and police department.

Make the effort, especially this summer, to get to that shop or restaurant on Santa Cruz Avenue, even if you have to walk an extra block or two. Summer is a great time for a stroll in downtown Los Gatos.

And now, for topic number four: the golden opportunity available to all Los Gatans.

It's called Community Unity. It's simple. It's inexpensive. It's wanted. It's the right thing to do. It's all about a Town, working together, for the benefit of the community. The concept is to unite Los Gatans under a banner of service.

Uniting a community for the benefit of everyone should be a fairly simple task – because ideally, I believe we all share a common goal – to maintain and improve everything about the place we call home. Everything about the Town of Los Gatos.

In the very simplest of terms, the idea is to gather all of the Town's service minded organizations and individuals together, brainstorm our community needs, prioritize those needs, and then tackle them together.

Call it what you want:

"Where there's a will, there's a way" or "It takes a village" or "There's strength in numbers." However you phrase it, the concept is the same:

Community Unity

Every Town has needs: its parks and trails, neighborhoods, schools, seniors and young people. Some of these needs are addressed by volunteers, some by employees.

The point is, when you combine the strengths and resources of all Los Gatans, there are enough concerned citizens in neighborhoods service groups, religious organizations, and student clubs to get a lot of things done -- now.

We conducted an informal survey and within a couple of weeks we had 70 organizations offer to be part of the Community Unity effort. The plan now is to publicly solicit service-minded organizations this month to meet together next month.

Of the 70 organizations that have already asked to be part of Community Unity, there are 11 high school clubs, 9 religious organizations, 5 corporations, 5 service clubs, and 40 other groups such as the Boy Scouts, CASA, LG Chamber of Commerce, Highway 9 Safety Group, and the Los Gatos Saratoga Recreation Department.

Each of these organizations already help locally and elsewhere and should be applauded for their efforts. The goal for 2005 is that each of these individual groups join together under the Community Unity umbrella to form a town wide partnership that is ready, willing and able, to take on our community's needs together.

This task can be accomplished in four simple steps:

1. Re-notify the 70 organizations that have already volunteered, via the email address they've already provided, and advertise in the paper for anyone else that wants to join, that the First Annual Community Unity Task Force meeting will be held next month.

2. Each organization will be asked to meet with its own members, decide which three community service projects it feels are most important, and then designate an individual to represent their organization at the March meeting.
3. At the meeting, we'll combine all these ideas, prioritize them and come up with a "Top 10" list.
4. Then, we'll ask who has the ability and the desire to take these projects on. The tasks will be delegated accordingly, and off we go!

Six months later the Community Unity Task Force will meet again to discuss the recently completed projects, ways to improve the process, celebrate their accomplishments, then prioritize and assign the next projects to be taken on.

This process insures continuity of the program and interaction between organizations -- all the while bringing new members – young and old -- into the program.

Since the service organizations participating in Community Unity are already established and well organized, they will proceed with their assignment as they would any other project – except this time it will be the Boy Scouts, Calvary Church, LG Rowing Club, Kiwanians, and members of the Harry Potter Club working together.

This way several things are accomplished:

- Needs identified by the community, are addressed.
- Residents, representing individual groups within our community -- students, seniors, faith organizations, and service clubs are working together, side by side.

- And, we've established at almost no cost, a model program that could be easily repeated semi-annually and serve as a model for other communities.

This is a win-win for everyone. By helping each other, we in fact help ourselves. Although the idea of Community Unity is to help each other and produce a better living environment, What do you think happens to property values and the desirability of living in a community, with a reputation of working together to provide an environment that is cleaner, safer and friendlier to its children and seniors?

By our community's immediate and passionate response, it's obvious there is a need and a desire for a program such as Community Unity. Please join your fellow Los Gatos residents in making this idea an immediate reality.

We've scheduled the first Community Unity meeting for Wednesday, March 29th at 7:00 p.m., in the Neighborhood Center Large Meeting Hall. Please keep your eyes open for more information in the local papers.

You can also subscribe to the Town's website "www.losgatosca.gov" to receive an email invitation.

I hope you'll step forward and volunteer to help. Community Unity helps you, your children, and your neighbors preserve and enhance Los Gatos.

Please remember, it benefits YOU to shop in Los Gatos.

It benefits YOU to volunteer in Los Gatos.

Los Gatos is YOUR Town and YOUR responsibility.

On behalf of the Town Council, I would like to thank you for coming here this evening and listening to this year's State of the Town address. Thank you and good night.